

Uplift & Erosion

North Rim Issue

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



April 2004

The newsletter of the Grand Canyon National Park Project Management Team

North Rim Projects

Last April, Grand Canyon National Park released the first *North Rim Issue, Uplift & Erosion*. It described several projects planned for the North Rim, the National Park Service's approach to planning and analysis for this area and a brief description of the North Rim Development Plan. We solicited comments from the public on specific projects and our proposed planning approach and appreciate the comments we received. The National Park Service (NPS) intends to continue to use a newsletter, as well as other means, to keep everyone informed about what is going on at the North Rim and, specifically for this issue, to invite public comment on the approach the NPS is proposing for the development of the North Rim.

Many of the projects described in the April 2003 newsletter are underway. There was considerable construction activity on the North Rim last summer that should resume again in the 2004 season. Projects under construction on the North Rim are briefly listed below and displayed on the map in this newsletter (numbers after the project name correspond to the map).

- ◆ Administration Building (1) – The former administration building has been dismantled and a new administration building is almost complete. Public comments were solicited in December 2000. An Environmental Assessment (EA) was released for public review and comment in May 2003 and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed in July 2003. Construction began at the end of July 2003.

- ◆ Emergency Services/Wildland Fire Facility (2) – Construction began on a new emergency services/wildland fire facility near the existing water tanks. The new facility is almost complete. Public comments were solicited in November 2000 and again in July 2002. An EA was released for public review and comment in February 2003 and a FONSI was signed in June 2003. Construction began at the end of June 2003.

- ◆ Exposed Frame Cabin Rehabilitation (3) – Rehabilitation efforts have already begun on several of the historic exposed frame cabins, as well as on an historic laundry and shower facility near the campground. The rehabilitation effort for the first phase (15 cabins and the laundry building) is almost

complete. Public comments were solicited in November 2000 and again in July 2002. This proposed action was analyzed in the same EA as the emergency services/wildland fire facility and was released for public review and comment in February 2003, with a signed FONSI in June 2003. Construction began at the end of June 2003.

- ◆ Campground Rehabilitation (4) – Campground roads and camper pull-throughs were paved in the fall of 2003. The removal of the existing fee collection kiosk and replacement with a larger registration building is expected to resume in the 2004 season. Rehabilitating existing restrooms and construction of a new restroom in the group site is expected to occur later in 2004. Public comments were solicited in November

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and December 2000. An EA was released for public review and comment in March 2003 and a FONSI was signed in June 2003.

- ◆ Water Distribution System Improvements (5) – Improvements to the North Rim water distribution system include replacing undersized and leaking antiquated pipelines, adding or replacing fire hydrants where necessary, upgrading a pressure boosting (pumping) station, and establishing a fire protection system. Implementation of this project began last summer and the first phase is nearly complete. Public comments were solicited in November 2000. This project was analyzed in the same EA as the campground rehabilitation and was released for public review and comment in March 2003, with a signed FONSI in June 2003. Construction began in July 2003.
- ◆ Dormitory Construction (6) – A park concessionaire, Xanterra Parks and Resorts, has begun the construction of a 44-unit dormitory for seasonal concessions employees. The foundation is in and the majority of the construction should resume later this season. Public comments were solicited on this project in July 2001. This project was analyzed in an EA that was released for public review and comment in May 2003 and a FONSI was signed in July 2003. Construction began in October 2003.



- ◆ RV Trailer Park Rehabilitation (7) – The contractor began the repair of employee recreational vehicle (RV) parking facilities, improvements to infrastructure to support parking facilities, and providing additional spaces for RV parking for seasonal employees. Public comments were solicited on this project in July 2001. This proposed action was analyzed in the same EA as the dormitory and released for public review and comment in May 2003, with a signed FONSI in July 2003. Construction began in October 2003.
- ◆ Mill Shed Project (8) - The evaluation of the mill shed (located in the concessions area and now used for storage) and its potential replacement was listed as one of several projects in the planning process in the April newsletter. The planning and analysis for this proposal is currently on hold, pending the outcome of a determination of the building's eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
- ◆ Greenway Trail (9) - The NPS is in the planning and analysis process for a segment of Greenway Trail between the North Kaibab Trailhead and the Grand Canyon Lodge. Greenway Trails are intended to provide greater access to outdoor trails thereby providing an alternative transportation opportunity (e.g. pedestrian/bicycle) for enjoying the park. The trail would follow the existing Bridle Trail and other social trails between the trailhead and the Lodge, with the intent of maintaining the rustic character of this area. The trail would not be paved and would not fully meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, but would be improved in some areas. A soil stabilizer would be applied to make the trail surface more durable and thus easier to use. Grand Canyon National Park Foundation (the official fundraising partner and "friends group" for Grand Canyon National Park) provides funds for this project which is expected to be implemented in the summer/fall of 2004. The Greenway Trail system initially proposed in the 1995 General Management Plan (GMP) to Cape Royal and Point Imperial is on hold, pending future consideration.



North Rim Development Plan

The NPS at Grand Canyon National Park is operating under the direction of the GMP. The plan provides fairly general and programmatic direction and guidance for resource management, visitor use, and general development for a period of 10 to 15 years. The vision for the North Rim of Grand Canyon is to provide a low key, uncrowded atmosphere that offers visitors opportunities to be intimately involved with the environment. This relaxed and rustic park experience is in contrast to the more developed South Rim and Desert View areas.

The park has initiated this development planning effort for the purposes of further refining direction outlined in the GMP for transit, visitor orientation, and structure utilization. The boundary of the study area includes the State Highway 67 road corridor through the Kaibab National Forest between Jacob Lake and the park entrance, Lindberg Hill (which is currently used as an NPS fire camp), CC Hill, and the developed areas along the Bright Angel peninsula.

Plan Objectives

Specific objectives include 1) improving visitor orientation and information services, 2) improving the distribution of visitor use on Bright Angel peninsula and Walhalla Plateau, 3) improving pedestrian and vehicle circulation at Bright Angel Point, and 4) preserving the rustic character of the North Rim.

Proposed Actions

Transit

The GMP proposed a transit system for the North Rim to enhance the visitor experience by alleviating traffic congestion at the terminus of Bright Angel Peninsula. As proposed in the GMP, the transit system would require mandatory ridership for day visitors to Bright Angel Point, unless they wished to hike or bike to their destination. Overnight guests would receive a parking pass. An orientation center, staging area, and transit center

would be developed on CC Hill. In the ninth year since the adoption of the GMP, visitation rates have actually been declining. This is in contrast to the four percent per year increase in park visitation from 1970 to 1989.

A transit analysis was conducted for this development planning effort. This analysis included reviewing data used in the preparation of the GMP, reviewing data on current parking use and exiting vehicles, assessing historical visitation data, and developing updated visitation forecasts. Based on this analysis, visitation to the North Rim during peak season is not expected to again reach levels recorded in 1993 until 2023. While crowding did occur in 1993, it appears that improvements in visitor orientation and management of employee parking in the Grand Canyon Lodge area would be adequate to meet visitor transportation needs for the foreseeable future. For these reasons the NPS proposes to defer implementation of a transit system until visitation levels warrant a change.

Visitor Orientation and Interpretation

The visitor center in the Grand Canyon Lodge area is the first formal orientation center encountered by visitors. This creates a draw to an already crowded area of the North Rim. Under the GMP, improvements to visitor orientation are tied to the construction of a transit center on CC Hill. The current development

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North Rim Dvp Plan continued..

plan is focusing on improvements in visitor orientation and interpretation, assuming that a transit system will not be implemented in the foreseeable future. The following actions are proposed:

- ◆ Retain the existing visitor center in its current location. Install an interpretive kiosk near the visitor center to accommodate visitors arriving after hours and after the visitor center is closed for the season. Develop a higher level of interpretive media within the current visitor center. (A1)
- ◆ Implement the GMP vision for improvements in visitor orientation and interpretive services at the Jacob Lake Visitor Center through the NPS and U.S.D.A. Forest Service partnerships. The existing structure would be enlarged if deemed necessary. The need for additional parking, restrooms, and a 24-hour information kiosk would be evaluated and developed if needed. The facility would provide functions such as information/trip planning, park backcountry permits, small-scale exhibits on the regional environment, and book sales. The feasibility of conducting lodging and campground registration/check-in services for NPS facilities would be explored. (A2)
- ◆ Improve road signage to the Jacob Lake Visitor Center, along the Highway 67 park approach road, and throughout the North Rim road system. Explore the feasibility of

changing existing road configurations in the Visitor Center area to make the visitor center easier to reach. (A3)

- ◆ Implement a Traveler Information System along the same road network with one transmitter at Jacob Lake and one at the north entrance to the park. (A4)
- ◆ Implement an auto tour with “points of interest” from the Jacob Lake Visitor Center to Walhalla Plateau scenic overlooks and Bright Angel peninsula. Develop a driving tour pamphlet to test appropriate locations for pull-offs.
- ◆ Establish daytime orientation/interpretation slide programs in the Lodge auditorium.
- ◆ Enhance interpretive opportunities along area trails.
- ◆ Establish an un-staffed orientation kiosk south of the entrance station, but prior to the Walhalla Plateau scenic overlooks turn-off.

Structure Utilization and Housing

The GMP identified several changes to many of the existing structures on the North Rim as well as the construction of new structures to support transit, visitor lodging conversions, and to improve sub-standard housing conditions. The development plan includes a re-evaluation of these components, including the following:

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North Rim Dvp Plan continued..

seven historic buildings in the housing area would be rehabilitated for administrative uses following movement of existing functions to the new emergency services/wildland fire facility (B1); the laundry-shower building in the campground would be rehabilitated (B2); an historic log restroom in the campground would be evaluated for adaptive re-use (B3); the NPS auto shop in the concessions area would be rehabilitated (B4); and the mule barn in the concessions area will be evaluated for its historical significance and stabilized as appropriate or removed (B5).

NPS employee housing needs are being evaluated as part of the development plan. While specific numbers of units needed to address current and projected future needs are currently being developed, it is anticipated that additional housing needs would be accommodated with the development of seasonal housing in an expanded seasonal housing/recreational vehicle (RV) area in the concessions area (B6). Any expansion of this existing seasonal housing area would stay within the confines of that proposed in the GMP, would minimize the amount of new ground disturbance and tree removal, and would evaluate aesthetics and the need for improvements in spatial distribution of the sites.

Transportation and Circulation Improvements

Grand Canyon Lodge Entrance Area Road Revisions - This project was included in a public

scoping letter released in December 2001. The proposal was subsequently put on hold pending the completion of a report identifying significant cultural resources on the Bright Angel peninsula and recommending various management options for consideration (Cultural Landscape Report) and a discussion of this project's relationship to the development plan. An option under consideration includes modification of the road to the Lodge to allow tour buses to turn at the Visitor Center to drop off and pick up visitors, and to limit passenger vehicle access to the Lodge. (C1) The existing road segment between the parking area and the Lodge would be converted primarily to pedestrian use. The main parking area would be reconfigured to allow for additional bus/RV parking. (C2)

North Kaibab Trailhead (C3) - There is a shortage of parking at the North Kaibab Trailhead. During the busiest times of the year, vehicles park along the road shoulders, resulting in safety concerns for pedestrians and vehicles. Approximately 20 additional parking spaces are needed. Alternatives that will be evaluated in the development planning effort include expanding the existing parking area or retain the existing parking area and develop an overflow parking area either on top of CC Hill or somewhere along the existing road towards CC Hill.



Construction Season

The construction season on the North Rim is short. Many projects will resume this season and will be underway concurrently. Periodic road delays, construction equipment on the roadways, and construction noise in visitor use areas can

be expected. The NPS will implement daily and weekly curfews on construction to minimize disturbance to visitors during higher visitor use periods.

What comes next?

Future editions of the *North Rim Issue, Uplift & Erosion* newsletter will provide updates on the status of projects and the development planning process. Any comments received as a result of this newsletter or other scoping efforts will be used to refine the analysis for these projects and the development plan. The NPS will prepare an

Environmental Assessment (EA) for the North Rim Development Plan. Any public comments received during this scoping effort will be evaluated during the preparation of the EA. The NPS will release the EA for public review and comment when complete.

Questions? Concerns? Comments?

The National Park Service invites public comment on the North Rim Development Plan and other specific projects listed in this newsletter. If you would like to provide input on these projects you may use the form below and then mail it to Grand Canyon National Park, Attn: Sara White, Environmental Compliance Officer, P.O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023, OR email Ms. White at sara_white@nps.gov. Comments must be received NO LATER THAN MAY 14, 2004. For questions, please call Debbie Lutch, Natural Resource Specialist, (928) 774-0095, or Sara White, Compliance Officer, (928) 638-7956.

- ◆ Do you have any comments on the National Park Service's proposed action for the North Rim Development Plan? If so, please list them:

- ◆ Do you have any comments on any other specific projects described in this newsletter or the planning approach the National Park Service is taking for the North Rim? If so, please list them :

- ◆ Would you like to receive a hard copy of the Environmental Assessment for the North Rim Development Plan when it is complete? If so, please provide your name and address. If you do not respond to this request, a hard copy of the EA will not be sent to you. However, this EA (when complete) and other environmental documents are routinely available for your review on the Grand Canyon National Park website www.nps.gov/grca/compliance/

Please be aware that names and addresses of respondents may be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. Anonymous comments may be included in the public record. The National Park Service, however, is not legally required to consider or respond to anonymous comments.

Map of proposed North Rim project locations

- 1 New Administrative Building
- 2 New EMS/Wildland Fire Facility
- 3 Exposed Frame Cabin Rehabilitation
- 4 Campground Rehabilitation
- 5 Water Distribution System Rehabilitation
- 6 New 44-Room Dorm
- 7 RV Trailer Park Upgrades
- 8 Proposed Mill Shed Replacement
- 9 Proposed Greenway Trail

Proposed Development Plan Components

Visitor Orientation & Interpretation

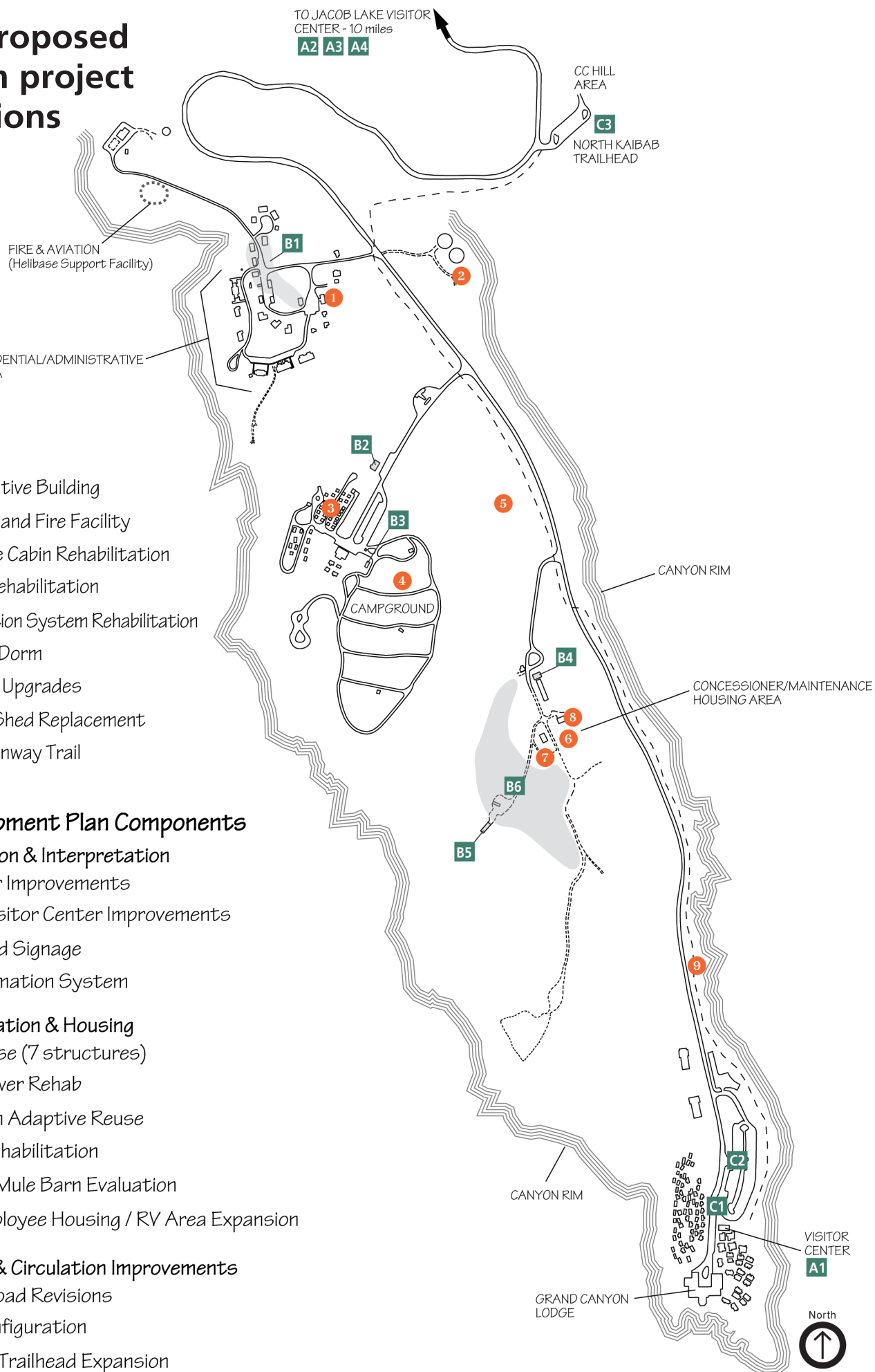
- A1 Visitor Center Improvements
- A2 Jacob Lake Visitor Center Improvements
- A3 Improved Road Signage
- A4 Traveler Information System

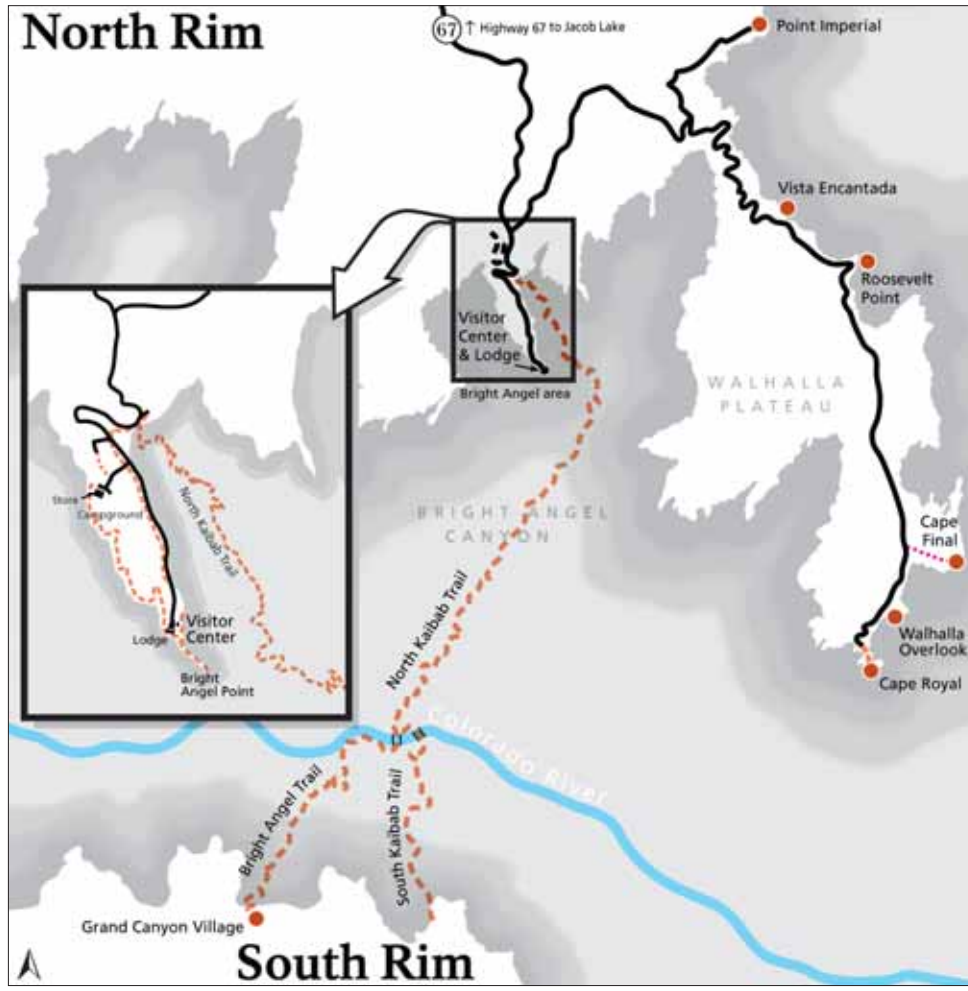
Structure Utilization & Housing

- B1 Adaptive Reuse (7 structures)
- B2 Laundry/Shower Rehab
- B3 Log Restroom Adaptive Reuse
- B4 Auto Shop Rehabilitation
- B5 Concessions Mule Barn Evaluation
- B6 Seasonal Employee Housing / RV Area Expansion

Transportation & Circulation Improvements

- C1 Lodge Area Road Revisions
- C2 Parking Reconfiguration
- C3 North Kaibab Trailhead Expansion





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National Park Service
US Department of the Interior
Project Management Team
Grand Canyon National Park
823 N San Francisco Ste A
Flagstaff Arizona 86001-3265

